



P.O. BOX 55168 | LEXINGTON, KY 40555 | TEL: (859) 429-0652 | FAX: (859) 813-5249

North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians
(859) 429-0652
info@naarv.org

For Immediate Release

Lexington, KY (May 14, 2021)— On May 8, 2021, the horse racing industry was rocked by the announcement that the 2021 Kentucky Derby winner, Medina Spirit trained by Hall of Fame trainer Bob Baffert tested positive for betamethasone in the post-race test taken after the race, placing the horse's win in jeopardy. The amount of betamethasone identified in the horse's blood was 21 picograms/mL. For perspective, this amount of betamethasone in the horse has the same effect as a drop of chlorine would have to treat three Olympic sized swimming pools for algae. That is, nothing. The North American Association of Racetrack Veterinarians (NAARV) has advocated for rational and common-sense thresholds for therapeutic medications in racing horses since its inception in 2014. As recently as December 2020, NAARV, with the support of both the HBPA and USTA, proposed a 100 pg/mL threshold (more than 4 times the level identified in Medina Spirit) for betamethasone, because research has recently been published demonstrating that positives below this level can readily be achieved with the simple exposure of the horse to urine from a treated horse, or the many betamethasone containing creams and sprays for topical use that are available for both humans and horses. There is no evidence that this level of betamethasone has any effect on horse performance, nor on the masking of pain. Picogram thresholds and zero-tolerance for therapeutic medications in this current environment where a thousandth of a picogram can be detected by state-of-the-art testing equipment are not relevant. It is time for the racing industry to follow the science and adopt rational thresholds. By focusing on insignificant levels of therapeutic medications, the regulators of our sport are depriving the industry of appropriate veterinary decision making, alarming the public and fans of horse racing, and creating an erroneous impression of dishonesty and exploitation. This must stop before it collapses the industry. It must stop for the sake of the horse.

NAARV is a Kentucky based 501(c)(6) non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the health and welfare of the racehorse through evidence-based medicine and the continuing education of the professionals and public involved with the sport.

###

